

Vine Mealybug

The Vine Mealybug (VMB), *Planococcus ficus*, is a serious new exotic pest in California that was first found in the Coachella Valley in 1994. Although it has only been found on grapes so far in California, alternate hosts include avocados, citrus and other crops. Within three years of its introduction, VMB spread throughout the entire Coachella Valley grape growing region. Today, it has been found in most grape growing counties including vineyards in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. VMB is easily spread by plant material, equipment, and even clothing. VMB has 5 to 7 generations per year, enabling populations to grow very rapidly. VMB produces a tremendous amount of honeydew, and waxy residue resembling melted candle wax. Unlike other mealybugs, all life stages of the VMB can be present year-round on a vine. During winter months, eggs, crawlers, nymphs, and adults are found under bark, within developing buds, and on roots.



Citrus mealybug on orange



Vine mealybug adults



Infested grape trunk and roots

Vine mealybug and Citrus mealybug look almost identical to each other, with both species having short tail filaments. Both species cause significant damage to crops.

Here's what to look for:

- ❖ White bodies of the female adults and nymphs – often clumped in groups.
- ❖ Masses of white cottony material on trunks and branches, especially under bark.
- ❖ Honeydew excreted by the insects on the leaves and fruit and the black sooty mold that grows on the honeydew.
- ❖ Ants on the trunk and branches.

County of San Luis Obispo Agriculture Commissioner's Office

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For questions on the trapping and sanitation for the Vine Mealybug:

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For questions on the biology of the Vine Mealybug, resources for identification of the pest in the field:

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UCCE website for general information and great photos: <http://vinemealybug.uckac.edu/VMB.htm>

UC IPM website: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r302301911.htm>